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BRIEFING PAPER

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Iraq-Iran War -- Update Supplement

Military Activity

The Iranian "offensive," begun on January 5, has ended. It was marked by heavy fighting along the entire front, from Gilan-e-Garb in the north to Abadan in the south. However, the most significant battles took place west of Ahwaz, in the vicinity of Susangerd, which included artillery barrages, close aircraft and helicopter support activity, and what may have been the largest tank duel since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. While losses were heavy on both sides, Iraq's counter-attack appears to qualify as a defensive victory, since no significant territory was recaptured by the Iranian military, which also suffered greater casualties. Iran's major achievement in this latest round was primarily psychological (marked by the display of some 500 captured Iraqi soldiers in Teheran) and may serve to boost President Bani Sadr's political standing if Iranian losses do not compete for attention.

Mediation Efforts

Olaf Palme arrived in Baghdad this week to resume his efforts to find a basis which would allow for a negotiating process to end the fighting. [redacted] B1, A3 [redacted] He will, however, explore the possibility of movement on the principle of non-interference and the respective positions on land boundary questions and the status of the Shatt.

Cuban Foreign Minister Malmierca admitted to the Coordinating Bureau of the Nonaligned Movement on January 15, that his mediation effort has been a failure and that the positions of the two parties remain too far apart. He pledged, however, to continue a NAM role in resolving the conflict.

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GDS 1/16/87

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REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 6/7/83

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Petroleum

No change from last report.

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Drafted: NEA/ARN:MWiznitzer:pdw
1/16/81, x 20695

Cleared: NEA/ARN:WNHowell
NEA:MDraper
NEA/IWG:RLindstrom
IO/UNP:LPope
INR/NESA:WPorter

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